

Flash fires kill 39—Why?

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inflammable materials may not be stored in buildings.

The walls thrown up in the basement when it was converted into apartments seven years ago were of combustible materials—another violation of the city building code.

Rev. Moore said that following his complaint to the building department, inspections were made several times—but nothing happened.

This checks with the Standard's finding on procedures used in City Hall for years on firetrap and building health menace cases.

Under standard practices, the violator is called in before the department, for an informal hearing—at which he always asks, and is granted, time to correct the abuse.

Weeks—and often months—later, the tenement owner is called back—this time for an appearance before a Municipal Court judge of the license division. Here, in some cases, the judge levies a small fine and permits the violator to walk out of the courtroom—for another months-long violation period.

In other cases, the judge merely grants a continuance, under which the landlord is asked to come back in six months or a similar time period.

If—as is usual—the landlord still ignores the building code, he may be called back into court a second time, and again fined. This may go on for as long as 18 months.

The law provides that in order to enforce the code, a judge

may levy a cumulative fine of up to \$200 a day against the tenement owner until the violation has been removed or corrected.

The Standard was unable to find a single case on record where even a \$1-a-day cumulative fine had been levied.

The fines that have been levied in the past year come to an average of less than \$10 apiece—a total of \$33,000 against more than 3,800 violators.

Three years ago, the Chicago Metropolitan Housing Council,

after a study of practices in the Municipal Court's license division, made two important recommendations:

1. That the steps taken by the building, health and fire departments BEFORE a case reaches the court be speeded up, so that the long delay between the filing of complaints and action on them could be short-circuited.

2. That once a case reaches the Municipal Court, the judges be instructed to grant no further delays to the errant landlord.

Listening Dog fails to heed 'LP' music

By Raeburn Flerlage

IF Oscars are given out at the end of 1949 by the record industry, RCA Victor stands a great chance of winning the very smallest of them all. Unable to hold its position of leadership by a progressive handling of the problems facing the record-buying public and the industry, the Listening Dog company has resorted to nipping at the heels of its rivals.

For the second time in a decade, Columbia had assumed the leadership in a move of importance to record buyers, dealers and manufacturers. The introduction of its revolutionary "LP Microgroove" records caught all competitors—including Victor—with hanging trousers.

Other companies immediately started talking of going along with the Columbia development, but Victor representatives spoke of "letting Columbia pay the expenses for the experiment; if it works, we'll come in and take over."

SPREAD RUMORS

Later they started circulating rumors of still another record-playing speed—not the "standard" 78 r.p.m., nor the new Columbia 33½ r.p.m. (used for years in radio), but an "in-between" 45 r.p.m. Protests from the industry—and from potential "LP" customers—failed to move them.

Victor went ahead with plans to introduce further confusion into an already confused and sagging industry. Their prime purpose appeared to be the breaking of Columbia at any cost.

The fact that the Columbia "LP" records were more economical, of higher quality and greater practicality, and that they were being overwhelmingly accepted by the record buying public, was of no apparent concern to Victor. They not only went ahead with their own plans, but began to outline seductive schemes to such companies as Capitol and Decca (who deal primarily in "single" records) for making 45 r.p.m. an industry-wide "standard."

This would, of course, involve the purchase by U. S. record buyers of three different record players for the reproduction of platters produced by the country's leading manufacturers.

Late developments, however, indicate that Victor will be faced with important stumbling-blocks: (1) Dealers are speaking of boycotting 45 r.p.m. records; (2) Mercury Records has announced its intention of converting to Columbia-type Microgrooves; (3) Columbia has added a new 7-inch "LP" disc, capable of handling the "hit-of-the-week"-type tune as well as shorter classics, to their catalogue—to retail at 60c for "pops" and 90c for "classics."

Record buyers, faced with the prospect of the industry's bloodiest scrap are keeping their fingers crossed.

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Although the Council made these recommendations in 1946—three years ago—no changes of any kind have been made in procedures either in the Building Department or the Municipal Court license division.

The Tenants Council, sponsored by the Progressive Party,

pointed out that the City Council also bears some measure of blame in the recent fire-trap deaths, since it is responsible for making any necessary changes to insure an adequate Building Code.



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